

VZCZCXRO6492
PP RUEHDBU
DE RUEHKB #1540/01 2940857
ZNY SSSSS ZZH
P 210857Z OCT 06
FM AMEMBASSY BAKU
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1528
INFO RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA PRIORITY 1788
RUEHTV/AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV PRIORITY 0035
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL PRIORITY 0002
RUEKDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO PRIORITY 0489
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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 BAKU 001540

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DEPT FOR EUR/CARC, NEA - PDAS JEFFREY, PM AND P; USNATO FOR OLSON

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/19/2016

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [MASS](#) [IR](#) [IS](#) [AJ](#)

SUBJECT: ISRAEL ENHANCING MILITARY RELATIONSHIP WITH AZERBAIJAN

Classified By: Ambassador Anne E. Derse for reasons 1.4 (b,d).

[1](#)1. (U) This is an action request; see para 8.

[1](#)2. (C) Summary: According to Israeli Ambassador to Azerbaijan Arthur Lenk, Israeli MOD DG for Political-Military Affairs Amos Gilad will visit Baku in late October to sign a new bilateral defense cooperation agreement. Admitting that the agreement is short on substance, Lenk said it is nonetheless a significant step that Israel hopes will pave the way for enhanced mil-mil cooperation and dialogue, and Israeli assistance in training. Israeli defense companies already are selling equipment to Azerbaijan under a 2005 agreement. According to Lenk, Israel also hopes for more regular consultations with the GOAJ on Iran. To that end, Israel will establish a Defense Attache in Baku (based in Ankara) and is contemplating providing military cooperation to Azerbaijan that could support Azerbaijan's integration into NATO. Lenk sought our views on enhanced Israeli mil-mil cooperation with Azerbaijan. We have concerns about unintended negative consequences. The Department's guidance is requested. End summary.

LATE OCTOBER DEFENSE AGREEMENT IN THE WORKS

[1](#)3. (C) During an October 19 meeting, Israeli Ambassador to Azerbaijan Arthur Lenk told Ambassador Derse about an upcoming visit to Azerbaijan by Amos Gilad, Director-General of the Israeli MOD's Political-Military Directorate, at the end of the October. Lenk said that an important new agreement between the Israeli and Azerbaijani defense ministries will be signed during the visit. Lenk characterized the agreement as a "good start," even though it will not be too substantive. Lenk highlighted that the upcoming agreement follows a September 2005 agreement on defense industry. The 2005 accord opened the door for Israeli defense companies to work in Azerbaijan. Lenk said the upcoming visit likely will include meetings with the Minister of Defense Industry, the Minister of Emergency Situations, the President's National Security Advisor, and the Minister of National Security.

[1](#)4. (C) Lenk said Israel wants a deeper "strategic dialogue" with Azerbaijan and hopes for "more regular consultations" with the GOAJ, particularly concerning Iran. Israel hopes

that discussions on Iran will be an important component of the upcoming visit and subsequent new defense dialogue. Lenk observed that the GOAJ has better access to Tehran than Tel Aviv does. Lenk also stated that President Aliyev is "clearly nervous" about Iran. He said that this past spring, Aliyev told the visiting Israeli Energy Minister that Iranian President Ahmadinejad warned Aliyev that "we're going to attack the places from where we are attacked."

15. (C) Lenk was hopeful on the prospects for enhanced Israeli-Azerbaijani cooperation. He told the Ambassador that multiple GOAJ officials have commented that there is little limitation on the level of potential cooperation between Azerbaijan and Israel. Commenting on why Baku perceives an advantage in closer mil-mil ties with Israel, Lenk noted that the GOAJ is afraid of Iran, the Israeli defense industry can offer Azerbaijan expertise and equipment, and the GOAJ's budget is rapidly growing.

ISRAELI MILITARY TRAINING FOR AZERBAIJAN?

16. (C) Noting that Israel intends to establish a Defense Attache position in Baku (based out of Ankara), Lenk raised the potential for Israel to provide NATO-related military cooperation and assistance to the GOAJ. Lenk noted that Tel Aviv might be able to assist Baku with military training exercises. Lenk remarked that Israeli assistance in this area would aim to support Azerbaijan's integration within NATO. Lenk commented that Israeli assistance might be of value especially given the USG limitations on security cooperation with the Azerbaijani military. Lenk acknowledged

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that he was not aware of all the specific forms of military assistance that Israel could offer, but he was confident that Israel was willing to help in this area.

COMMENTS ON THE DEFENSE INDUSTRY MINISTER

17. (C) Lenk provided several observations about Azerbaijan's new Minister of Defense Industry, Yaver Jamalov. Lenk noted that Jamalov "still does not know what he does not know." Lenk acknowledged that Jamalov's previous background in the oil industry may have given him valuable experience in administering one industry that could be transferred to a different industry. Lenk also remarked that Jamalov traveled to Iran, Pakistan, and Turkey in September. Lenk suggested that Jamalov's recent visits likely were for "shopping" purposes.

ACTION REQUEST

18. (C) Action Request: Post requests the Department's views on proposed Israeli mil-mil assistance to Azerbaijan. While Israel is a good friend and ally of the United States, we are concerned that an increased Israeli presence -- particularly a military presence -- in this Shi'a Muslim state on the border of Iran could create unintended negative consequences for our own ongoing military cooperation and broader regional security objectives. We also note that Lenk was recently quoted in the press here as highlighting that "Israel's, Azerbaijan's and the United States' interests in the region coincide."
DERSE